

An American Crown Jewel

The comeback of Japanese Americans within the past 20 years may be one of the crown jewels of "democracy at work" in the United States.

Issei and Nisei living on the west coast in 1942 well remember the arbitrary mass evacuation of some 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry to come on desert wastes because of alleged "military necessity."

Two-thirds of them were United States citizens.

The evacuation, regarded as America's "worst wartime mistake," was unprecedented in American history and a mass violation of constitutional and civil rights that must never be repeated.

Since the end of World War II, persons of Japanese ancestry have been on the

receiving end of a repentant democracy in action.

The legal sanctions against the Issei have been eliminated. They have been given the right to become naturalized citizens and many of them have responded.

Opportunities undreamed of before World War II have been opened to the Nisei.

An the United States has tried to make amends for losses of property sustained by evacuees to the tune of nearly \$37 million.

This struggle for human dignity by Japanese Americans is an inspiring story, which ought to be repeated to all Americans so that it may never occur again and to the free peoples of the world so that they may better understand democracy in action.

Americans of Japanese ancestry are a living example of what democracy can and has accomplished. Twenty years ago, they were a suspect minority, virtually imprisoned and yet today, they enjoy status and acceptance unparalleled in their own history.

All this happened in the American way.

In retelling a small part of the 1942 evacuation story in this Holiday Issue, it is our hope that we may be able to promote the cause of civil liberties and perhaps persuade the uncommitted and unaligned nations and peoples of the world to seriously consider the democratic way of life as the best means to attain their national hopes and goals.—Editor.

1961 — Merry Christmas — Happy New Year — 1962



MEMBERSHIP PUBLICATION: JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

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'Evacuation'

The great tragedy that befell some 110,000 Japanese Americans after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor 20 years ago was in the arbitrary action by the United States government to move them from their west coast homes to ten inland camps called war relocation centers.

To present another aspect of this story and as companion pieces to "Command Decision," published elsewhere in this issue, Saburo Kido is relating events which took place at National JACL Headquarters after Dec. 7, 1941, to start another chapter of "Living With JACL," and we have extracted the case histories recorded in the JACL statement made in 1954 before the House Judiciary Subcommittee in connection with the Japanese American Evacuation Claims Act.

The Evacuation Story may seem unreal by looking at cold figures and military aspects alone. But the real sting that numbed evacuees 20 years ago can be real even today after reading some of the typical cases that appear in the story to follow—Editor.

JACL STATEMENT

Extract: JACL Statement for the House Judiciary Subcommittee HR 7435, West Coast Hearings, 1954

EVEN FROM a brief glimpse into the history of evacuation, it can be readily seen that a forced migration of people such as that of the Japanese Americans from the west coast in 1942 could not be administered without a great amount of sacrifice to the people and their property.

This evacuation was without precedent in U.S. history. Obviously, governmental agencies responsible for its execution had no previous experience on which

(g) Urban and business losses; and
(h) Rural and farm losses.

Time of Movement

Witnesses appearing before the Tolan committee in February, 1942, deplored the fact that no provision was being made for protecting the property of persons who had already been or were about to be evicted. Evidence that there were numerous instances of sales of personal property at great sacrifice appear throughout the record.

Instances of persons taking advantage of the situation by

For those who remember the bleak years immediately after Pearl Harbor was bombed twenty years ago, the story of the mass evacuation of persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast is still an unforgettable experience.

There has been, since that time, a new generation of young Americans born who are not aware of this unfortunate period of U.S. history.

It is to them and other Americans that we package in this Holiday Issue the seven columns of the "Washington Newsletter" by Mike Masaoka, published in the late spring this year in the Pacific Citizen, reporting and commenting on one chapter of the Army publication: "Command Decision," which purported to tell of the background activities within the then War Department that led to the fateful decision to authorize mass and arbitrary military evacuation of some 110,000 civilian persons of Japanese ancestry, citizens and aliens alike, from the West Coast in the spring of 1942.

The chapter on the subject was entitled: "The Decision to Evacuate the Japanese from the West Coast" and published by the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army.—Editor.

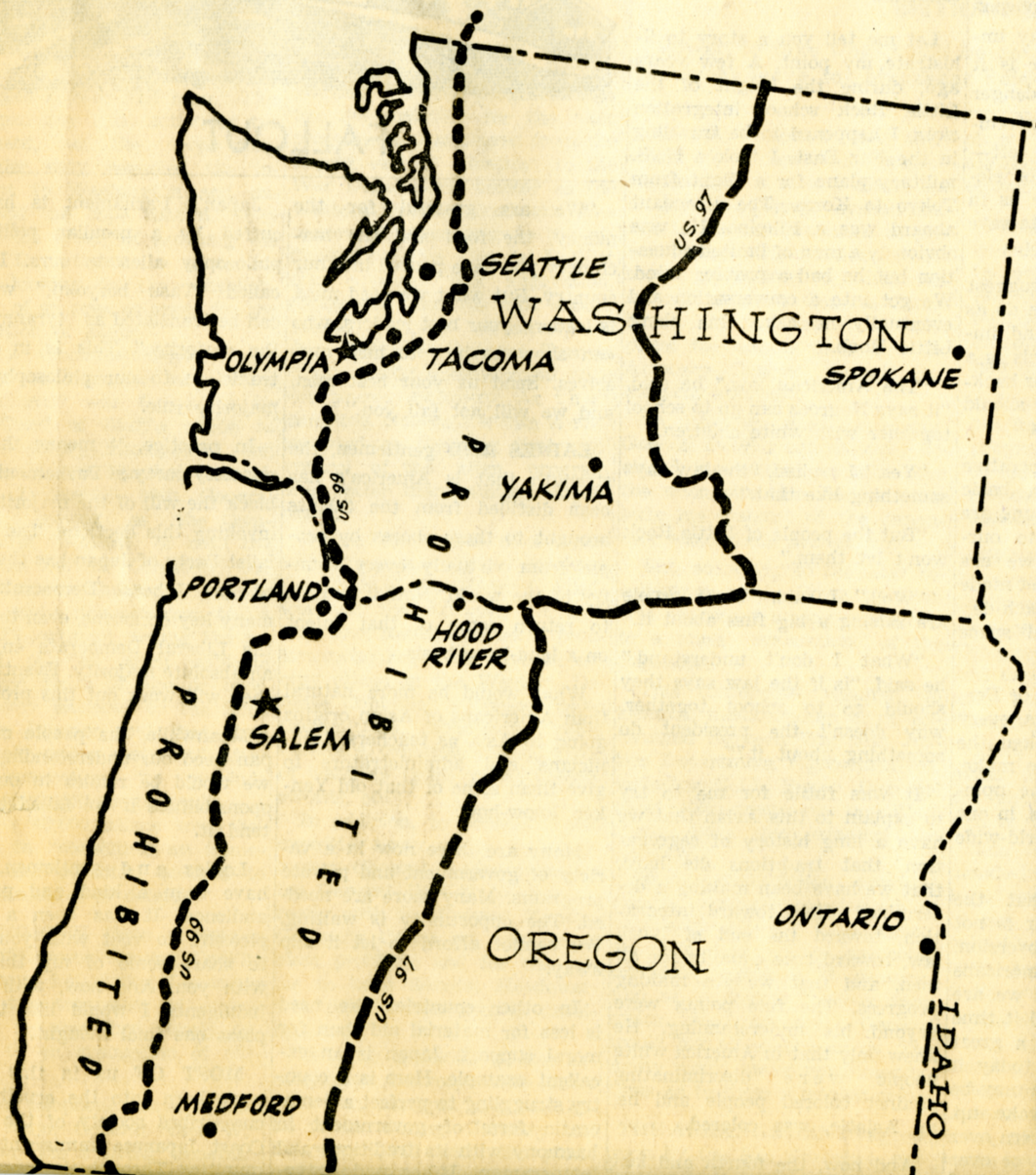
COMMAND DECISION

By MIKE MASAOKA

Washington, D.C.

ALTHOUGH most history books devote scant space, if any, to the arbitrary, mass military evacuation of some 110,000 civilian persons of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of whom were American-born citizens, from the west coast in the spring of 1942, it is noteworthy that the recently published Pentagon volume, "Command Decision,"

Because the information contained in this documentation is of material interest to every JACL member and reader of the Pacific Citizen, as well as other Nisei and Americans of good conscience, we summarized this Command Decision as our Washington Newsletter in June and July.





Administrative techniques had to be formulated and revised with the needs as they arose. The formation of sound policy and procedure was further complicated by racial prejudice and war hysteria. Caught in this mesh of events were the Japanese evacuees.

LOSSES, BY the very nature of this wartime experiment, were substantial and inevitable.

A survey shows that the range of losses extend from one extreme to the other. But, in the main, they can be placed in the following categories:

- Losses incurred at the time of movement;
- Losses sustained because of inadequate storage facilities;
- Losses due to vandalism, pilferage, arson, burglary, etc.;
- Losses caused by the Farm Security Administration collection policy;
- Losses attributable to individuals who took advantage of the evacuee's misfortune;
- Losses chargeable to mismanagement of property;

ees at sacrifice prices were reported to the Tolan committee by G. Raymond Booth of the American Friends Service Committee on the west coast.

He declared: "In most cases that came to our attention the individual received a telephone call, purportedly from an agency of law enforcement, the FBI, Navy intelligence, or the police, in which they were giving them a friendly tip that 'You are going to move sooner than you thought. We are giving you a break. You had better start packing.'"

"Well, sometime in the same, day this person would be visited by someone who was very generously offering to buy. It is that sort of thing that is going on and on until, well, you can realize the state of dismay and despair and even terror resulting from that.

"Junk dealers moved down on Terminal Island in advance. They came down there in great numbers on one particular occasion.

"Here is another case. Frank (Continued on Page A-6)

Office of the Chief of Military History of the Department of the Army, lists this unprecedented wartime movement as among the major policy decisions of World War II.

The chapter—fifth in sequence after such Command Decisions as that to effect the defeat first of Germany—entitled "The Decision to Evacuate The Japanese From The Pacific Coast," was authored by Dr. Stetson Conn, who taught history at Yale University, Amherst College and George Washington University.

Unlike such other documentaries as "The Final Report" by the Western Defense Command and "Americans Betrayed" by Dr. Morton Grodzins, which report on the causes leading up to the evacuation, this official Army history records the background information that created the "military necessity" justifying that wartime mistreatment within the then War Department itself.

ACCORDING to the author, who has documented his article profusely, the ultimate decision to authorize the evacuation was made "at the highest level—by the President of the United States as Commander in Chief."

While underscoring the military character of that decision, it nevertheless reveals the political pressures behind the motivation for that judgment.

At the same time, however, it serves to confirm that neither the JACL nor any other private organization was in a position to reverse that defense authorization to evacuate all Japanese from the West Coast.

In wartime, the military is supreme and civilians may not intrude upon that sovereignty.

To this writer who frankly admits to his considerable prejudice, the Conn analysis seems to attempt to "white-wash" the contributions made to that final decision by then General John L. DeWitt, the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command.

As the chapter is published, it appears that at one time General DeWitt opposed the evacuation only of the Japanese and subsequently of the inclusion of citizens as well as aliens and that he finally bowed to the advice of others, and particularly that of then Major, later Colonel, Karl R. Bendetsen, chief of the Aliens Division of the Provost Marshal General's office and the War Department's internal security representative to the Western Defense Command.

"ONE of the Army's largest undertakings in the name of defense during World War II was the mass evacuation of persons of Japanese ancestry from the Pacific coast states—from all of California and from the western halves of Oregon and Washington.

"The decision to evacuate the Japanese was one made at the highest level—by the President of the United States acting as Commander in Chief.

"What Army plans and recommendations lay behind this decision?

"With what alternatives was the President presented?

"To what extent was his decision based on (actual) military considerations?"

Following this opening paragraph, the study indicates that the initial plans for the evacuation of suspected persons from strategic areas along the Pacific coast concerned the "enemy aliens" of all three Axis powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan.

"Most of the Germans, and a large proportion of the Japanese and Italians lived in or near the principal cities and adjacent strategic areas. For several decades the Japanese population had been the target of hostility and restrictive action, a situation that unquestionably colored the measures taken against these people after Pearl Harbor."

The War and Justice Departments reached an agreement on July 18, 1941, that gave to the Justice Department, including the FBI, primary responsibility for the control of "enemy aliens" in the event of war.

And, long before the attack of December 7th, the FBI and Army and Navy Intelligence had compiled a list against those whom there were grounds for suspicion of disloyalty to the United States.

The presidential proclamations issued immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor for the "rounding up" and internment of Germans, Italians, and Japanese "enemy aliens" suspected of hostile intent presumably should have taken care of all the "dangerous enemy aliens."

By specifically authorizing the exclusion of "enemy aliens" from "any location in which residence by an alien enemy shall be found to constitute a danger to the public peace and safety of the United States," it was later alleged that the presidential proclamations also provided a basis for evacuation on a larger scale.

DURING the first few days after the attack on Hawaii, the west coast—as so many of (Continued on Page A-3)